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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 8 October 2001, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Hasmy ..... (Malaysia)

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01-57126 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 18: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (A/56/1 and Corr.1, A/56/23 (Part II, chap. VI and IX-XI), A/56/23 (Part III, chap. XIII D-F and H) and A/56/159; S/2001/148, S/2001/398 and S/2001/613)

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Agenda item 12: Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/56/3, chap. VII E)

Agenda item 94: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/56/88)

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

2. **The Chairman** said that decolonization had been a defining issue of the latter part of the twentieth century. The adoption, in 1960, of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV)) and the establishment, in 1961, of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples undoubtedly had helped many of the 189 States that were currently Members of the United Nations to gain their independence.

3. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic), rapporteur of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, introduced the report of the Committee on its work during 2001 (A/56/23). The Special Committee's recommendations were contained in Part III of the report.

4. The proclamation of a Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism had provided a new impetus to United Nations work on decolonization. Implementation of the Plan of Action for the Second Decade was a major objective of the Special Committee. The Plan contained recommendations for specific measures to be taken in implementation of General Assembly resolutions.

5. During the period under review, the Special Committee had encouraged further dialogue with the administering Powers, representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and experts. Those discussions had been particularly productive in the case of New Zealand and Tokelau but had not produced the hoped-for results with regard to the administering Powers of American Samoa and Pitcairn. In the absence of visiting missions, which would have been extremely useful, the Special Committee had conducted regional seminars alternately in the Caribbean and the Pacific, which had provided a forum for the representatives of the people and civil society in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and had allowed the Special Committee to explain its activities to the participants. The Caribbean regional seminar, held in May 2001 in Havana, had been highly successful and open, as could be seen from the report of the Special Committee to the General Assembly.

6. The Special Committee had also considered information from the Non-Self Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 of the Charter and had reiterated the importance of timely transmission by the administering Powers to the Secretariat. It had also urged the administering Powers to guarantee the inalienable right of the people of the Territories to their natural resources.

7. The Special Committee had considered the work of the specialized agencies and other international organizations in implementation of the Declaration and had held consultations with the Economic and Social Council regarding the need for increased assistance to

the Non-Self Governing Territories, particularly the small island territories, in the light of the downturn in the world economy. On the basis of information provided by the Secretariat, experts and NGOs, it had submitted recommendations to the General Assembly.

8. The Special Committee had invited all parties to assist New Caledonia in its peaceful progress towards self-determination. It had noted with satisfaction that Tokelau and New Zealand were cooperating in the return of authority to the traditional leadership in the context of the Modern House project, which was viewed as a means to the achievement of self-determination. It had also reviewed the situation in American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Guam, Montserrat, Pitcairn, Saint Helena, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the United States Virgin Islands and had made recommendations to the General Assembly concerning the constitutional, social and economic development of those Territories.

9. The Special Committee was aware of the importance of information, and had recommended that the Department of Public Information and the Department of Political Affairs should continue to publicize the work of the United Nations on decolonization. On the issue of military activities and arrangements by the administering Powers in the Territories under their administration, it had reiterated that the administering Powers should take all necessary measures not to involve those Territories in offensive acts or interference against other States.

10. The Special Committee had adopted a resolution asking Argentina and the United Kingdom to consolidate the process of dialogue and cooperation in order to find a peaceful solution to the sovereignty dispute regarding the Falkland Islands (Malvinas). It had decided to transmit the documentation on Gibraltar and Western Sahara to the Assembly and had adopted a resolution reaffirming the right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination and independence.

11. He urged the members of the Fourth Committee to adopt the draft resolutions contained in the Special Committee's report.

12. **Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoué** (Côte d'Ivoire), Acting Chairman of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, described the guidelines followed by the Special Committee during the period under review and said that despite the progress achieved since 1960, decolonization had not yet been completed. After considering the information provided by the administering Powers under Article 73 *e* of the Charter and consulting with the various stakeholders, the Committee had adopted one decision and nine resolutions by consensus. It had also adopted unanimously a resolution on Puerto Rico. With regard to international assistance to the Territories, the Special Committee had stressed the importance of cooperation with the Economic and Social Council, which had subsequently adopted a resolution on implementation of the Declaration by the specialized agencies.

13. The Special Committee recognized the important contribution of the representatives and peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and would take full account of their views in planning its programme of work. The regional seminar for the Caribbean, which had been held in Cuba, had provided a forum for the Special Committee to hear the views of the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, many of whom had come to report on their activities and to announce their intention to invite the administering Powers to elaborate plans for decolonization. The Special Committee had endorsed the substance of the seminar's recommendations and conclusions.

14. The Special Committee attached great importance to the participation of the administering Powers in its work and welcomed the attendance at its meetings of France, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States, even though the two last named States had attended in an unofficial capacity. Cooperation with New Zealand had been very constructive. The representatives of Tokelau and the New Zealand Government had expressed their respective concerns at the meetings held in June 2001 with the Special Committee. Following those meetings, the *Ulu-o-Tokelau*, the highest authority on Tokelau, had declared that it had a better understanding of the Special Committee's *raison d'être*. Now that it was better informed about the situation of Tokelauans, the Special Committee was of the view that programmes of work on a case-by-case basis could succeed with the cooperation and goodwill of all the parties concerned. It was therefore desirable to have the participation, preferably formal, of the administering Powers in the work of the Special Committee. In that regard, the

Committee regretted that the United Kingdom and the United States of America had still not clarified the modalities of their cooperation on the question of Pitcairn and American Samoa.

15. The Special Committee welcomed the peaceful conduct of the elections in East Timor, which was a step towards that Territory's accession to independence. It also paid tribute to the public spiritedness and determination of the Timorese people and expressed its gratitude to the United Nations and the international community for their support. Much more remained to be done and, as the Acting Chairman of the Special Committee, he called on members of the Fourth Committee to support the recommendations that had been submitted to the General Assembly.

General debate

16. **Mr. Valdés** (Chile), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Rio Group, reiterated the Group's support for the process of decolonization in strict compliance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, of resolution 1514 (XV), and of other relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, and welcomed the fact that the number of Non-Self-Governing Territories had declined from 62 to 17 since the adoption of the Declaration. However, the fact that 17 Territories were still on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories proved that the process of decolonization was far from complete, as the proclamation of a Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism showed. The plan of action for the Second Decade was based on the principle that the international community and the United Nations should assist the Non-Self-Governing Territories in their evolution towards self-government. The objective was to put an end to colonial situations, on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the particularities of each Territory and favouring the most judicious solution, which, in certain cases, meant respecting the principle of territorial integrity.

17. The Rio Group stressed the importance which it attached to the full and unrestricted cooperation of the administering Powers, which should provide the information requested under Article *73 e* of the Charter and assist the Special Committee in establishing a programme of work for each Territory. In that connection, he congratulated the Government of New Zealand for its exemplary work and expressed appreciation to France for the progress that had been made towards the decolonization of New Caledonia.

18. The Rio Group wished to reiterate its support for the Special Committee, which should remain the principal organ of the United Nations for carrying forward the process of decolonization, and welcomed the activities that had been undertaken the previous year, including the organization of the regional seminar in Cuba. The Group stressed the importance of holding such seminars and hoped that the Fourth Committee and the General Assembly would adopt the recommendations and conclusions put forward by the Special Committee and the participants in the regional seminar in their respective reports.

19. The Rio Group stressed once more the need for Argentina and the United Kingdom to resume talks aimed at finding a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the dispute over sovereignty of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. The Rio Group welcomed the conditions under which the elections for the first constituent assembly had been held in East Timor and called upon all the parties involved to draft a constitution that reflected the will of the Timorese people and to cooperate in the final stage of the transition to independence. It paid tribute to all the personnel of the United Nations Transition Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) and wished to express its support for an international presence in East Timor during the post-independence period. With regard to Western Sahara, the Rio Group firmly hoped that the settlement plan would be implemented in accordance with the terms that had been agreed upon on 30 August 1988 by Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Harma y de Rio de Oro, the 1997 Houston agreements and the 1999 protocols, and in accordance with the Charter and with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. The Rio Group hoped that the parties would continue their negotiations, under the auspices of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, so that the people of Western Sahara could exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. Measures should be taken to facilitate sustainable and balanced development in the small island Territories of the Caribbean and Pacific, which comprised the majority of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. The international community must also assist those Territories in combating their

environmental problems, natural disasters, drug trafficking and money-laundering.

20. **Mr. Nacerodien** (South Africa) expressed appreciation to the Special Committee for its report on its work in 2001. He emphasized that, if international peace and security were to prevail, the United Nations and the Security Council in particular must take into consideration such problems as poverty, disease and oppression. Similarly, there could be no sustainable development without respect for freedom, democracy and human rights.

21. The Special Committee had an important role to play in ending colonial domination. While South Africa had been able to overcome the era of apartheid, it was aware that many peoples were still deprived of freedom, dignity and the right to self-determination. It therefore hoped that the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism would allow the United Nations and its Member States to relegate colonialism to the scrap heap of history, thus opening the way for an era of partnership and collective action in greater harmony with the aspirations of peoples, United Nations resolutions and the principles enshrined in the Charter.

22. His delegation was seriously concerned about the situation in the Middle East, and considered that Member States were obliged under the terms of the Charter and General Assembly and Security Council resolutions to end the violence and the foreign occupation, and to recognize the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

23. Concerning the situation in Western Sahara, the South African Government was concerned about the delay in the implementation of the agreements concluded between the parties concerned. While it considered that significant progress had been made in the framework of the settlement plan, in particular concerning the identification of eligible voters, and while reaffirming that an imposed solution would not lead to a lasting peace, his Government invited the United Nations to hold the referendum which the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) had prepared so that all Saharans could exercise their right to self-determination.

24. **Mr. Requeijo** (Cuba) said that decolonization had been one of the Organization's major historical achievements and stressed that, since the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, over 60 new independent States had been created. Nonetheless, he noted with grave concern that the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories had remained practically unchanged in recent years. Cuba could not express its satisfaction when there was a negative and dangerous trend emerging, whereby delays, disinterest and a lack of a sense of history made it impossible to find a definitive and lasting solution to the colonial problem. Criteria such as land area and number of inhabitants had been unscrupulously and unacceptably manipulated in order to deny peoples their inalienable rights of self-determination and independence. It was just as unacceptable that certain Powers were trying to replace the right to independence with the right to self-determination, while the two rights could not and must not be assessed separately from one another.

25. Referring to the efforts made by the Special Committee to improve its methods of work, he said that such efforts could not succeed without the cooperation of the administering Powers, and noted with deep regret that some of them still refused to maintain serious and ongoing relations with the Special Committee and continued to hinder its work and block its initiatives.

26. Observation visits to Non-Self-Governing Territories were no more than a distant memory, and some people were calling for them to be replaced by propaganda campaigns directed against the very purpose of the Special Committee, in a veritable act of manipulation aimed at spreading confusion and fostering prejudice.

27. Certain administering Powers continued to carry out military manoeuvres and live ammunition firing exercises in the Territories under their domination, despite the growing opposition of the local population and world public opinion. Such practices, which flouted the most basic rights and interests of the affected populations, must cease immediately. Similarly, the frantic exploitation and pillaging of the natural resources of Non-Self-Governing Territories, which Cuba had already condemned on various occasions, was a flagrant violation of the letter and the spirit of General Assembly resolution 2621 (XXV).

28. To overcome these problems, Cuba believed that it would be very useful to continue the regional decolonization seminars, as they made it possible to call attention to Territories still under the colonial yoke

that were too often deliberately forgotten by the mainstream media. Information on such Territories was not well disseminated, despite the creation of a web page on decolonization which was indeed consulted by a growing number of people interested in the subject.

29. With regard to Puerto Rico, Cuba welcomed the adoption of a series of resolutions recognizing the inalienable right of that State to self-determination and independence, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960. It reiterated once again its firm support for the independence and self-determination of the brotherly people of Puerto Rico.

30. Cuba was satisfied with the progress made in the decolonization process in New Caledonia and the Tokelau Islands, and noted with satisfaction that East Timor would be admitted as the 190th State Member of the United Nations during the fifty-sixth session. That proved that the work of the Committee, as difficult as it might be, had a purpose and produced results.

31. However, Cuba noted with great concern the paralysis in the process of settling the issue of Western Sahara and the fact that the conditions set by the interested parties had begun to be dangerously modified and manipulated, representing a risk not only for the future of the process but also for regional and international security and stability. Cuba reaffirmed that the holding of a just, transparent and impartial referendum and strict respect for the settlement plan and the Houston accords, as well as for General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on the subject constituted the only way of arriving at an honourable solution to a conflict that had lasted too long.

32. With respect to the question of the Malvinas Islands, Cuba once more expressed its full support for the legitimate right of the Argentine Republic in the sovereignty conflict over the islands, and considered that the dialogue and cooperation established between the parties could lead to a just, peaceful and honourable solution.

33. As to the need to respect the rights and interests of the people of Guam, Cuba urged the administering Power to show full cooperation and to respect the relevant resolutions adopted by the Special Committee and the General Assembly.

34. Once again, Cuba reaffirmed the importance of the role the General Assembly of the United Nations must play in the long and patient struggle for the defence of the inalienable rights of all peoples of the world. It was in that democratic and open forum that all could speak and be heard without the ever-present shadow of anachronistic rights of veto, which made it impossible to get to the root of problems and were exercised to the detriment of the interests of the most disadvantaged and those most weighed down by the colonial yoke and wrongful occupation.

35. **Mr. Zaemsky** (Russian Federation) said that his country, one of the founders of the Special Committee on Decolonization, had always taken an active part in the consideration of decolonization issues. The current session of the General Assembly was taking place at the beginning of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, and the Russian Federation considered it to be an opportune moment to set out its position on the question.

36. One of the priority tasks was to seek to increase the effectiveness of the Special Committee's work. To achieve that, a three-fold approach should be adopted: firstly, the orientation of work towards concrete results, including through the elaboration of individual programmes for the Non-Self-Governing Territories, for example through practical measures aimed at promoting self-governance; secondly, strengthening the non-confrontational and pragmatic approaches taken by the United Nations in the area of decolonization; and thirdly, promoting a dialogue between the Special Committee and the administering Powers.

37. The Russian Federation emphasized that the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories would not be able to exercise their right to self-determination and independence effectively unless full account were taken of the objective realities of their political, social and economic development and of the whole variety of forms and modalities of self-determination based on freedom of choice and respect for human rights.

38. Regarding the issue of East Timor, the Russian Federation commended the activities of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) and the progress achieved towards declaration of the territory's independence. The Russian Federation considered that the United Nations had played a key role in overcoming the crisis in the territory, and that provision must be made for the

further evolution of that role in the context of the international community's presence in the new State. The scale, configuration and time limits of the international presence should be determined on the basis of East Timor's real needs and of the development of the situation in the island. It should be the United Nations which had the role of coordinating the broad range of foreign actors involved in the formation of the new State. The entire process, including the transition from UNTAET to a new form of United Nations presence, should be smooth and well calculated so that the achievements of the United Nations in East Timor were not compromised.

39. With respect to the prospects of a settlement in Western Sahara, the current situation did not give grounds for optimism, and the settlement plan signed by the parties was still not implemented, in spite of the hopes raised recently by the package of measures presented by the Secretary-General. The Russian Federation reaffirmed its position on the issue and stated that it would welcome any settlement of the dispute in Western Sahara provided that it was acceptable to all parties to the conflict. That was not a pious hope, but a recognition of the fact that for any settlement to be effective and lasting any proposed formula should deliberately avoid implying winners and losers, and should be based on concessions by both parties. The Russian Federation also emphasized that the United Nations settlement plan represented a good basis for a political settlement of the conflict. The political will to overcome obstacles remained a decisive factor in solving decolonization issues.

40. **Mr. Sinha** (India) said that colonialism was contrary to the fundamental tenets of democracy, freedom, dignity, progress and human rights, and that one of the great achievements of the United Nations had been to rid the world, or most of it, of that scourge. The mandate established in the Declaration had been largely, although not completely, fulfilled, in that 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories remained on the list. The complexities that existed with respect to those Territories were well-known, and the task was therefore all the more delicate. The last steps were the most difficult, but the responsibility they represented could not be shirked.

41. It was essential to persevere in a spirit of cooperation, understanding, political realism and flexibility in order to attain the goal. All States, the administering Powers and others alike, had a shared responsibility in that regard. It was of fundamental importance that the peoples of those Territories should be able freely to choose the kind of political system they desired for their own governance. The role of the United Nations was to ascertain the wishes of those peoples and to facilitate the creation of the political, economic and social structure of their choice.

42. The administering Powers had a special responsibility in that regard and, as cooperation — not confrontation — was the key to its work, the Special Committee on decolonization had sought to engage them in a constructive and meaningful discussion on the fate of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. In that regard his delegation welcomed the participation of the United Kingdom in the Caribbean Regional Seminar which had been held in Havana in May. Such interactions should be encouraged. Not only should account be taken of the initial discussions held on American Samoa and Pitcairn, but the engagement should be expanded to include the other remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories.

43. The majority of Member States had only recently emerged from colonial rule. They had all fought for their freedom one way or another and they knew that the freedom they had won — sometimes at great cost— could not be taken for granted. That realization was the underlying motive for the inclusion of the sixth paragraph of the Declaration. He strongly denounced the actions of terrorists who sought to overthrow representative governments and to destroy the fundamental rights that the Declaration sought to protect yet who described themselves as freedom fighters, besmirching the memory of those who truly had fought for freedom. Terrorists were not freedom fighters.

44. At the dawn of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, India, as a founding Member of the United Nations and of the Special Committee , reaffirmed its commitment to the noble ideals enshrined in the Declaration.

45. **Mr. Mackay** (New Zealand) said that the continuing role of the United Nations in the process of decolonization remained important to many delegations. New Zealand continued to have responsibility for Tokelau, which remained on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. Tokelau faced an extraordinary challenge because of its situation — it consisted of three atolls, each separated from the other

by large stretches of the South Pacific, none of which was more than 200 metres wide nor higher than five metres above sea level. It had a total population of 1,500. There had never been a resident administering Power presence on the Territory.

46. As the Administrator of Tokelau had said before the Special Committee, on 28 June 2001, Tokelau and New Zealand saw self-determination as a dynamic and evolving process. Tokelau's need was to devise for itself a form of self-government that fitted its cultural context through a process of local empowerment. What one saw in Tokelau was a largely self-generated approach to decolonization, where the administering Power and third parties recognized what the people of Tokelau constructed.

47. The *Ulu-o-Tokelau* (paramount chief of Tokelau) had told the Special Committee in June that the people of Tokelau did not see self-determination as a sudden vote on the existing three options; they were not looking at the issue with only the free association option in mind but were also looking at the full integration option in order to make an informed choice.

48. A major step towards self-government in Tokelau had been the withdrawal of the New Zealand State Services Commissioner from his role as employer of the Tokelau public service as from 30 June. With regard to the development of Tokelau's international personality, he pointed out that Tokelau's admission to UNESCO as an associate member was set for 15 October, the first day of the UNESCO General Conference.

49. The issue in Tokelau was not about eliminating colonialism but about resolving issues of governance for the very smallest of States. New Zealand remained committed to working with the Special Committee and abiding by the freely expressed wishes of the people of Tokelau on their future status. It continued to respect Tokelau's wish to move at its own pace on the process of self-determination.

50. **Ms. Howe-Johnson** (United Kingdom) welcomed the opportunity to again present the United Kingdom's position as administering Power. Reviewing the progress made since the Committee's last meeting, she said that the Overseas Territories Consultative Committee had held its third meeting, in September, under the chairmanship of the new Minister for the Overseas Territories. That Committee provided a forum for structured political dialogue between the elected representatives of the Overseas Territories and Her Majesty's Government on such matters as the process of constitutional review and human rights issues arising from the United Kingdom's international commitments.

51. The United Kingdom's partnership with its overseas Territories continued to evolve. On 21 June, the Government had introduced the British Overseas Territories bill, which would grant British citizenship, with right to abode in the United Kingdom, to citizens from 13 of the 14 British Dependent Territories. It would also formally change the nomenclature from dependent to overseas Territory to reflect more accurately the nature of the relationship. On 26 September, the United Kingdom and most of its Overseas Territories had adopted an Environment Charter which set out 10 guiding principles expressing the key environmental commitments that the international community had adopted. They were followed by specific commitments indicating how the United Kingdom and Overseas Territories' Governments would work for the benefit of the environment. That was a good example of how progress could be made by working together in an area of mutual interest, which was critical to the future prosperity, well-being and even survival of many of the Overseas Territories and their communities.

52. For the United Kingdom, the wishes of the populations concerned, exercised in accordance with the other principles set out in the United Nations Charter and in other international treaties, were of paramount importance. The United Kingdom relationship continued to be based on the fundamental principles of self-determination, mutual obligations, freedom for the Territories to run their affairs to the greatest degree possible and a firm commitment from the United Kingdom to help the Territories economically and to assist them in emergencies. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee surely recognized that the United Kingdom Government's approach was basically the same as its own. That commonality was, however, unfortunately not always reflected in all relevant resolutions, in particular of the Special Committee. Her delegation, while welcoming the fact that the omnibus resolution stated that in the decolonization process there was "no alternative to the principle of self-determination", regretted that the Special Committee continued to apply selectively that principle, which was enshrined in the United Nations

Charter and in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

53. The United Kingdom would continue to work to improve its cooperation with the Special Committee. It had sent a representative to the Regional Seminar held in Havana in 2001. It welcomed the efforts made by the Special Committee to pursue the informal dialogue with the administering Powers with a view to possible removal of the Territories from the list.

54. **Mr. Rani Ismail Hadi** (Malaysia), speaking on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that the Association's support for the decolonization process was reflected in its support for the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

55. Since the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, sweeping changes had transformed the world from one in which most of the population had lived under the yoke of colonialism into one in which the majority of humankind exercised their right to self-determination. The Association was convinced that the objectives set in that landmark document were the road map for the attainment of peace, justice and sustainable development. In that regard, ASEAN called on all the administering Powers to take all necessary steps to ensure the effective and speedy implementation of the Declaration and other relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

56. Despite the concrete progress achieved, some Non-Self-Governing Territories were still not able to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. The international community had a collective responsibility to the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories and should evolve mechanisms to meet those Territories' special characteristics and problems. In the matter of self-determination, all available options were valid, provided that they were exercised in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV) and with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

57. It was the duty of the international community to work and dialogue with the Non-Self-Governing Territories and with the concerned administering Powers, so as to enable the peoples to realize their aspirations and to adopt the political, economic and social systems of their choice. In that regard, ASEAN acknowledged with appreciation the dialogue initiated between the Non-Self-Governing Territories and the respective administering Powers, which had made encouraging progress.

58. Similarly, the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations could play a significant role in expediting economic and social progress in the Territories. In that connection, ASEAN supported the promotion of close cooperation between the Special Committee and the Economic and Social Council in order to enhance United Nations assistance to the Territories and thus enhance awareness among the peoples of those Territories of the options and benefits offered by the United Nations system. More than ever, the United Nations could play a crucial role in eliminating the last remnants of colonialism.

59. **Mr. Mejdoub** (Tunisia) emphasized that, despite significant progress, the task of decolonization remained unfinished and continued to require the commitment and cooperation of the international community. In particular, the Special Committee played an important role in that regard and the continuation of its efforts, aimed in particular at formulating a programme of work for the Non-Self-Governing Territories on a case-by-case basis, required the cooperation of the administering Powers.

60. Tunisia hoped that the dialogue between those Powers and the Special Committee, which in recent years had made encouraging progress, would be further strengthened. In that connection, the administering Powers must transmit to the Secretary-General information on their respective Territories and the representatives of those Territories must participate in the Special Committee's work in order to make known the population's aspirations and to make the population aware of its rights and its options with regard to self-determination.

61. In that context, seminars and visiting missions played a decisive role. The assistance of the Special Committee, of the United Nations system and of the regional organizations was crucial for the social and economic development of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, in particular the small island Territories.

62. By proclaiming the period 2001-2010 as the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the General Assembly had reaffirmed that decolonization continued to be at the forefront of the concerns of the United Nations and constituted a

collective task requiring active support from Member States and the United Nations system.

63. **Mr. Yahya** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) expressed his country's strong approval of the efforts made by the Special Committee, supported by the international community, to realize the dream of all the peoples of the world, the right to freedom, independence and self-determination.

64. The Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (resolution 1514 (XV)), as well as subsequent resolutions, had affirmed the right of peoples to self-determination and independence. It was high time that the administering Powers implemented those resolutions and took whatever measures necessary in response to the wishes of the international community and the peoples concerned. It was shameful that peoples continued to labour under the yoke of occupation while the very countries which oppressed them called for liberty, democracy and respect for human rights.

65. The international community must resolutely oppose the practices of certain countries in the Territories which they administered, for example the use of those Territories for military operations against a third country. Such activities affected the health of the population and their economic and social environment and violated paragraph 12 of General Assembly resolution 55/147 which required the administering Powers in question to eliminate the remaining military bases in the Non-Self-Governing Territories which they administered.

66. Some countries were oppressing the populations of the regions under their control (imprisonment, ill-treatment). They were also making radical geographic and demographic changes and forcing the indigenous people to flee, creating unprecedented population flows. The international community must therefore take whatever measures necessary to put an end to such practices and ensure implementation of the relevant international resolutions.

67. The administering Powers should cooperate actively with the Special Committee with a view to permitting the inhabitants of the Territories to express their views within the framework of the Committee's work or outside the Committee, in accordance with the Plan of Action for the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (A/56/61, Annex). The United Nations must allow the inhabitants of the Territories to participate in those efforts and provide them with the necessary financial resources so that they could exercise their legitimate rights to freedom and independence.

68. Economic and cultural support must continue to be provided to the Territories in question, either on a unilateral basis or through United Nations specialized agencies. Particular attention must also be paid to the small Territories: there should be periodic visiting missions to those Territories and more suitable proposals should be submitted to the General Assembly to enable their populations to exercise their right to self-determination, including independence, in accordance with the resolution of the Special Committee contained in document A/AC.109/2001/26.

69. **Mr. Paolillo** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the MERCOSUR countries and associated States, stressed that the continued existence of colonial situations was incompatible with the founding principles of the United Nations. Peace and security at the international, regional and interregional levels could not be guaranteed until such situations were remedied.

70. The MERCOSUR countries and associated States had strongly supported the proclamation of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism because, despite the considerable progress made, the decolonization process was still incomplete, as clearly evidenced by the existence of Non-Self-Governing Territories. He welcomed the efforts undertaken by the Special Committee, in particular the regional seminar organized in Cuba. Recalling the dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom regarding sovereignty over the Malvinas, he expressed full support for the statement made by the representative of Chile on behalf of the Rio Group and reiterated the declaration on the Malvinas signed by the Presidents of the Member States of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile, in which they had indicated their support for Argentina in that regard, and expressed the hemisphere's hope that the problem would be resolved rapidly and fairly in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations and the Organization of American States. He also expressed surprise that the United Kingdom, which had sought peaceful and negotiated solutions in other cases in the past, had not adopted the same position with regard to the Malvinas.

71. **Ms. Howe-Jones** (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply concerning the statements

on the Falkland Islands made by Chile (on behalf of the Rio Group), Cuba and Uruguay (on behalf of MERCOSUR), said that her Government had no doubt about Britain's sovereignty over those Islands and the other British dependencies in the South Atlantic. Moreover, countries had a duty to respect the right of self-determination of the people of the Falkland Islands, who had made clear their wish to remain British. The elected representatives of the islanders had expressed their views clearly when they visited the United Nations for the debate in the Special Committee on 29 June 2001. They had asked that Committee to recognize that they, like any other democratic people, should be allowed to exercise the right of self-determination. As the democratic voice of the Falkland Islands people, they had reiterated their view that they did not want to be part of Argentina.

72. Despite its differences with Argentina on the subject of sovereignty, the United Kingdom continued to strengthen its bilateral relations and to cooperate with that country on practical arrangements on matters of common interest in the South Atlantic. It was confident that relations would continue to flourish in that spirit of cooperation and mutual interest.

Requests for hearings

73. **The Chairman** drew attention to aide-memoir 1/01 containing 11 requests for hearings relating to the questions of Gibraltar, the Western Sahara and the small Territories (agenda item 18), and agenda item 93 concerning the specialized agencies. He suggested that, in accordance with the usual practice, the communications should be circulated as Committee documents for consideration at a subsequent meeting.

74. *It was so decided.*

75. **The Chairman** suggested that, in view of the brevity of the time available and in accordance with the Committee's timetable, all new requests for hearings should be circulated as Committee documents for consideration at the next meeting.

76. *It was so decided.*

77. **The Chairman** informed the Committee that he had received a communication from the Chief Minister of Gibraltar containing a request to take the floor on the question of Gibraltar.

Organization of work

78. **The Chairman** informed the Committee that, with reference to the holding of the general debate scheduled from 10 to 16 November, it would appear that many delegations would prefer to adhere to the practice established by the General Assembly not to hold a Main Committee meeting at the same time as the general debate. He therefore suggested that the Committee should not meet during the general debate from 10 to 16 November.

79. *It was so decided.*

80. With reference to the possibility of amending the timetable for consideration of agenda item 87 concerning the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and item 88 concerning the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices, the Chairman drew the Committee's attention to paragraph 36 of resolution 51/241 and informed it that, following a discussion with the Permanent Observer for Palestine and other interested persons, it had been agreed that the Committee should maintain its programme of work regarding consideration of those two agenda items.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.